

JOHN S. BRINKERHOFF

The Real World

he awoke
in the ache and heat of boot camp,
opened his eyes to living
on false walls and high nets,
in the bump and growl of his helmet.
his rifle was made for his hands.

he grew up at normandy
in the shade of glider wings and sound,
then fell into poses,
dented helmet cocked and rifle stock on his hip,
for the kids
puking quietly between their boots.
he was larger than myself
a hero, a god
to be loved forever.

he left a leg in belgium
and died when I touched new york.
he was all I could ever have been.
and sometimes, at meetings over lunch, he comes
deep-eyed
fierce in the roaring dust,
touching the talk around me to wordless babble,
calling me back from the grave.